Google Put AI Visibility Inside The SEO Tool On Purpose via @sejournal, @slobodanmanic

Google added AI search visibility reporting to Search Console, and the place it chose to put it is the whole argument. It is not a new product, and it is not a separate “Generative Console.” The same tool you already open to see how you rank in search now also shows how often you turn up in AI Overviews, AI Mode, and Discover’s AI features. Where Google filed the feature is Google settling a debate it has been having in words for a year: There is no separate discipline called GEO, so there is no separate place to measure it. AI visibility is search visibility, and it lives in the search tool.

If someone has spent the past year selling you “generative engine optimization” as a new practice with its own playbook, its own budget line, and its own software subscription, Google has now disagreed in the most concrete way a platform can. It told you what it believes by where it put the button.

The Reports Show Impressions, Not Clicks

Google’s announcement puts the new data in Search Console as generative AI performance reports. They report impressions: how often your pages appeared inside Google’s generative AI features across Search and Discover. You get the dimensions you already know from the standard performance report, pages,

countries, devices, and dates, down to hourly granularity. It is rolling out to a subset of UK websites first, then wider.

Two absences matter more than anything the report includes.

It does not show clicks. At launch, you can see that you appeared inside an AI Overview or an AI Mode answer. You cannot see whether anyone clicked, visited, or did anything at all. You get presence, not consequence. Google's Search Console help confirms the impressions-only scope at launch.

It also arrives next to a control that lets you opt your content out of AI responses. One release hands you a meter for your presence in AI answers and a switch to remove yourself from them. That pairing is a tell about Google's posture: it would rather give you both the gauge and the exit than keep fielding requests for either.

Why The Location Is The Message

Search Console has defined what counts as search performance for twenty years. The thing it reports is, by definition, the thing Google treats as search performance. So when AI Overviews and AI Mode impressions show up inside it, next to your blue-link impressions, that placement is an accounting decision: AI answers are search surfaces, and your visibility in them is search visibility.

Google has been making this argument in words for a while, that the way to be visible in AI search is the same work as being visible in search. I wrote about it when search and agents got folded into one product, and again when Google's own AI guide spelled it out. Building the measurement into Search Console instead of standing up a separate tool is that sentence compiled into software. Companies show you what they believe by where they spend engineering. Google spent it filing AI visibility under search.

The Free Tool Will Bend Where You Look

The moment Google AI visibility becomes free, native, and trackable inside a tool every operator already has open, it becomes the AI visibility people actually watch. Not because Google's surface matters more than ChatGPT's or Claude's or Perplexity's. Because it is the one with a free dashboard.

That is the streetlight effect applied to an entire channel. You look for your keys under the lamppost because that is where the light is. Google is about to switch on a bright, free light over its own surface, and the darker corners, the ones where standalone trackers charge you to look, get less attention by default. The trouble is that AI visibility is plural. Most AI-cited pages appear in only one engine, so a page cited constantly in one model can be absent from the next. A Google-only view is one engine out of several, handed to you with the authority of a number in a tool you already trust.

The cross-engine trackers are not the losers in this. They do the harder thing Search Console never will, which is look across ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity, and the rest, where most of your AI visibility actually lives. The risk sits on the operator's side, not theirs. A free, native, single-engine number is easy to over-trust, and "free and already in the tool I open every morning" can crowd out the cross-engine view that covers the other surfaces. If anything, a free Google-only report makes the multi-engine tools more necessary, because someone still has to see the engines Google will never report on.

And even inside Google's surface, the number you are handed is a leading indicator, not an outcome. Impressions say you showed up. They do not say it mattered. That is the exact trap from a recent episode on how AI visibility gets mistaken for a

business result: the metric is real, easy to chart, easy to drop in a deck, and disconnected from whether a buyer acted. A free impressions report is the most seductive version of that trap yet, because the cost of pulling it falls to zero.

Stop Buying The GEO-Is-Different Story

The takeaway is not a tool to learn. It is a story to stop believing.

Stop treating AI visibility as a separate workstream with its own budget and a quarterly report of its own. Google has now told you, by where it put the feature, that it is the same discipline measured in the same place. Fold AI-visibility tracking into the SEO reporting cadence you already run. Pull the generative report for the Google slice when it reaches your account. Keep one cross-engine check for the surfaces Google will never show you. Read every impressions figure the way you read an impression in the standard report: a sign you were eligible, not proof you won. And make the opt-out a deliberate decision, not a default you discover later.

The feature is useful. The placement is the point. Google filed AI visibility under search because, as far as Google is concerned, that is where it has lived all along. Anyone still paying for a separate GEO practice is optimizing for a distinction Google stopped making.

More Resources:

This post was originally published on No Hacks.

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